

Socialist Standard

August 2005 Vol. 101 No. 1212 £1

London Bombings
Economic Rise of China
Global Poverty
Belfort Bax and Eleanor Marx
The Problem with Capitalism
New Labour: New Leader

Praise God...

and pass the ammo

The London Bombings



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August 2005

socialist standard

website: www.worldsocialism.org

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The Socialist Party of Great Britain

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Saturday 6th August at the address below.

Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notice should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.

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“Terrorist insurgency is not an instinctive reaction to injustice, but a policy choice both for footsoldiers and generals alike.”

The London Bombings: Recruiting Killers, page 6

Bombings, Bombers and a Bomb

The recent traumatic events in London provide a poignant reminder of the depths of anger, frustration and outrage simmering beneath the outward demeanour of many people who are leading apparently normal lives. When such extreme acts of violence, with their tragic repercussions, happen so close to home, they understandably impinge more acutely on our consciousness and touch us in a far more personal way. Straightaway our thoughts become crowded with the names and faces of any family or friends who might possibly have been travelling near the affected area and we anxiously seek assurance of their well-being.

Fortunately such barbarous occurrences remain comparatively rare in London or the other major cities of Western Europe but in some parts of the world, alas, they are an almost daily experience.

Any half-decent, sensible human being quite properly deplores the invidious, misguided zeal - be it personal, political or religious - that spawns such a terrible, unreasoning thirst for bloody retribution in the name of whatever injustice or absolute truth. Political leaders, of course, waste no time in making a sanctimonious response by roundly condemning the "evil terrorists" and "brain-washed fanatics". Doubtless their perception of the public mood is accurate but the weasel words of politicians assuming the high moral ground are an unwelcome encroachment. They intrude upon the very real sympathy and feeling of

support we reserve for the victims of such atrocities by inducing another kind of feeling altogether: one of profound nausea.

The breathtaking hypocrisy with which these serial perpetrators of ultimate, officially sanctioned, state violence, denounce those who, unofficially, pursue similar tactics - which, though horrendous, are on a far small scale - is truly stomach-churning. They uniformly assert that only warped minds, with a callous disregard for human life, would deliberately choose to detonate bombs in an environment (such as a tube train) specifically selected to cause the most damaging effects and indiscriminately kill or injure the greatest possible number. And without giving any prior warning. And in the rush hour when the maximum number of people would be exposed.

State-approved violence has been



Hiroshima

responsible for tens of millions of deaths. The ethics of "legitimate" or "just" war have no bottom line. If there ever was such a bottom line, the saturation bombing of Hamburg, Dresden and Tokyo, generating the new military tactic of fire-storms, certainly plummeted below it. These raids resulted in vast numbers of victims exceeding by far any previous tally.

Sixty years ago, this month, on the 6th August 1945, the Japanese city of Hiroshima was virtually flattened - unnecessarily - by a single atomic bomb carried by a single plane. Three days later, another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

The city of Hiroshima was specifically selected (though obviously not by warped minds with a callous disregard for human life) as a target with an environment likely to cause the most damaging effects and indiscriminately kill or injure the greatest possible number. Many of its buildings were composed of paper, wood and straw. Mock-up structures built from similar materials had earlier been erected in the Utah desert for testing incendiary potential. Also, Hiroshima had been spared any previous aerial bombardment so that the precise effects of the explosion could be determined.

The bomb was dropped at 8.15 am, without prior warning. In the rush hour when the maximum number of people were exposed. The official recorded number of deaths from the bomb is 186, 940.

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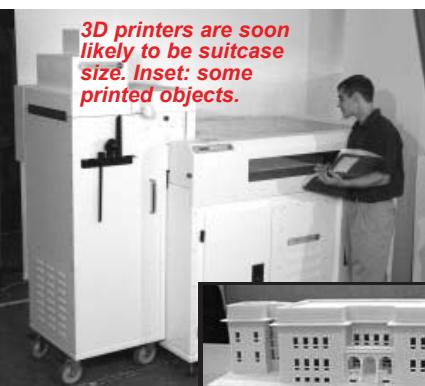
Up in smoke?

The End of Mass Production?

A big question for socialist theorists is the matter of parts and supplies. While much of food production is likely to be localised, some highly specialised parts and accessories are not going to be generally available in the region. Global transportation would be a last and expensive resort, but what if many specialist machine components could simply be ... emailed?

A new generation of 3D printers is making it possible to recreate perfect three-dimensional objects from a software template which can be posted through an ordinary email server. At present the 'ink' is confined to wax and plaster powder so the finished models have limited durability, but work is already proceeding with fine-grain steel using micro-heat welding instead of glue to hold the finished article together, and laser and water-jet cutters using emailed plans can work on heavy durable materials to make components as good as traditionally machined parts.

In fact, with the rise of fabrication laboratories, or 'fab labs', individuals can have their own designs and specifications custom-made on the spot (Scientific American, June 2005). Once the labs have shrunk from room-size to suitcases, we may be looking at the democratization - for a price - of the production process, or in fact, the reclaiming - within limits - of the means of production. The idea that mass production may be on its way out is not new: "Mass production, the defining characteristic of



3D printers are soon likely to be suitcase size. Inset: some printed objects.



the Second Wave economy, becomes increasingly obsolete, as firms install information-intensive, often robotised manufacturing systems capable of endless, cheap variation, even customisation. The revolutionary result is, in effect, the de-massification of mass production." War and Anti-War - Alvin & Heidi Toffler (1993, Little, Brown and Co).

Being toffs who hang around with generals, politicians, think-tank drivers and other assorted toffs, the Tofflers are never overly concerned with how their capitalist utopia will impact on the lower orders, so they describe in perfect equanimity a Third Wave capitalism which even by today's standards would be a catastrophe for workers, with widespread 'oceans of poverty' around 'hi-tech archipelagos' such as California, Hong Kong or the Rhineland.

Capitalism's development of customised production could hardly be expected to benefit the toiling masses for whom mass-production is both a treadmill and a treat factory. They would never be able to afford the luxury of individual consumer targeting. Nonetheless, the ability to micro-produce with minimal waste and distribution costs remains one of the most exciting innovations socialist society could possibly inherit, and one which it could put to very good use.

Is Socialist Theory Scientific?

"Nobody has yet proven that this experiment was safe," says Marina Bay's lawyer Alexander Molokhov, in the first day's Moscow hearing of the amateur astrologist's £170m lawsuit against Nasa, launched hours after the successful collision of the probe Deep Impact into the comet Tempel 1. Bay's claim that such cosmological 'vandalism' has altered the world's horoscope towards possible disaster can also not be proved false, and such lack of proof is clearly enough in the eyes of some lawyers to start proceedings these days, notwithstanding Nasa mission engineer Shadan Ardalani's curt dismissal: "The analogy is a mosquito hitting the front of an airliner in flight. The effect is negligible." (BBC News Online, 4 July).

The Moscow court is unlikely to be bamboozled by such chancers, but the attack on science is common enough: don't do it unless you can prove it is safe. The problem is that science, with the usual exception of mathematics, can never actually prove anything, an apparent loophole exploited by everyone from 9/11 conspiracy theorists to neo-creationist

Intelligent Design advocates. Now the law is being asked to test the assertion that astronomers can't prove while astrologers don't have to.

Socialists have every sympathy with scientists who find themselves under attack from unscientific prejudice and blatant opportunism, since this is not very dissimilar from our own experience. For a theory to be valid it should accord well with the facts, and offer one a way to disprove it. Thus religion and creationism are not valid scientific theories, whereas evolution and gravity are. Socialist theory fits the first criterion, but what about the second? Is it possible to disprove it? Perhaps. If capitalism fed, clothed and looked after its people in peace and without coercion, socialism would not be disproved but it would be unnecessary. If genetic research uncovers an irreducible aggression or profit-seeking gene, socialism could be said to have been disproved. But nobody has yet found this gene, or shown any other evidence that would make socialism unviable. Meanwhile, like Marina Bay and her enterprising lawyer, our opponents expect us to prove everything we say while they are not obliged to provide any evidence in support of their argument, and indeed airily dismiss the very large volume of evidence against themselves.



What about human nature?

Dear Editors

Reading the article "Talk about Socialism" in July's *Socialist Standard* I began to wonder in what, and how many, different ways socialists approach the argument of "human nature".

"People are naturally lazy /greedy/aggressive", etc. - how easily these phrases trip off the tongue, usually before the brain has been put into gear. Aren't we all at some time, in certain circumstances, lazy, greedy, aggressive? I would suggest we are all a complex blend of "general psychological characteristics, feelings and behavioural traits" (Concise Oxford Dictionary re. Human nature).

These are some of my "human nature-an alternative view"-

Cooperation - currently in the majority world subsistence farmers and the like already cooperate in family groups to provide basic needs, not buying and selling but simply producing.

Cooperation/hospitality - many cultures in the world have a very strong family/community welfare ethos and base their daily lives on working together for the benefit of all. Most of these people live in the majority world and although they have little they share what they have (even with strangers).

Generosity and Compassion - from the minority world where most people's lives are generally less harsh a large number of people willingly donate (money) on a regular basis in the hope of easing other people's difficulties, e.g. child sponsorship, AIDS programmes, clean water programmes.

Compassion/Empathy - in areas/times of major/natural disasters volunteers are never lacking, nor slow to offer assistance, whether practical or monetary.

Giving/Sharing - huge armies of regular volunteers at home and abroad are at work to help and improve people's lives, e.g. lifts to hospitals; shopping for the old or disabled; youth workers in clubs and sports associations; parents' associations linked to schools, playschools etc. for better education and facilities; organizers of charity events.

Yes, a lot of this is to raise money! Because that is the system now. But these are examples of people giving time freely to organize events, bake cakes, engage in sports and other promotional events for altruistic reasons.

Sharing - cooperatives of consumers in local areas putting in time on a regular basis to benefit themselves and the community.

Cooperation - bartering systems where people swap skills-a few hours ironing for the repair of a water leak.

An observation about retired, i.e. not-working-for-money people: many will say it's the best time of their lives and that they don't have enough time to fit everything in. And what are they doing? They are often involved in the kind of activities they actually enjoy, taking care of the grandchildren, helping out even older folk in the community, growing vegetables, involving themselves in ongoing educational projects, having an occasional holiday. In fact, generally playing a part in the community in ways which would admirably suit a socialist society.

So, as far as things are now, in this non-socialist, totally capitalist world, yes, of course there are those who are 'lazy', 'greedy',

'aggressive' and I believe volumes could be and have been written by anthropologists giving perfectly good reasons for such behaviours in our concrete jungles and human zoos.

I prefer to call attention to the industriousness, generosity, and compassionate aspects of human nature.

Working together for the common good?

Yes!

People can do it, people do do it - it's all part of that wonderful diversity called Human Nature.

JANET SURMAN, TURKEY

Nothing's changed

Dears Editors

Twenty years ago, there was a high profile pop concert organised by the Live Aid group, to help the famine in Ethiopia. Now two decades later nothing has changed.

The Live 8 concerts addressed the effects of poverty not its causes. Unless the present social system has changed, for many more decades down the line there will be more Live Aids, more G8 summits on this poor continent, and more Bonos and Bob Geldofs, yet all their cries for billions to be spent on aid are still unlikely to make more than the smallest dent in the deprivation.

Although there is criminal incompetence of Africa's post-colonial black elites (the people who call themselves presidents, prime ministers, and in some instances kings and princes of the continent have waged war on their own people and plundered the continent's wealth to ever bulging Bank account in Switzerland), the main problem of the continent is capitalism.

It is common knowledge that up to two-thirds of the world's population are hungry, while millions actually die from starvation each year. Why in a world of potential plenty is so elementary a human need as food neglected for some many people?

Some would deny that we live in a world of plenty and claim that the cause of world hunger is natural scarcity. That in other words, some people starve simply because not enough food can be produced.

In the present state scientific knowledge and productive techniques, enough food could be produced adequately to feed the population of the world.

World malnutrition then is not a natural but a social problem. Its cause must be sought not in any lack of natural resources but in the way society is organised. World society everywhere rests on the basis of the resources of the world, natural and manufactured, by very rich minorities.

Rock stars or any other celebrities will not persuade the rich class to make world poverty history. It's in fact the world market system that ruled the world. Acting like a natural force beyond human control, it has much power than any national government.

The market creates an artificial scarcity and organised waste that is responsible for poverty and hunger in the world today. The law that governs everywhere is "no profit, no production".

MICHAEL GHEBRE, LONDON NW1

Letter to Bob

Dear Editors

Below is a letter I sent to Bob Geldof.

Dear Bob,

I deeply respect your sincerity in campaigning for the end of poverty through the world. My understanding of poverty is the insufficiency of the necessities of life leading to an inability to enjoy the wealth potentially able to be created in abundance by humankind, including leisure pursuits, the arts and the basic necessities including shelter, warmth, food and water and the freedom from illness. This deprivation leads inevitably to hunger and disease. I believe that this insufficiency is largely caused by money.

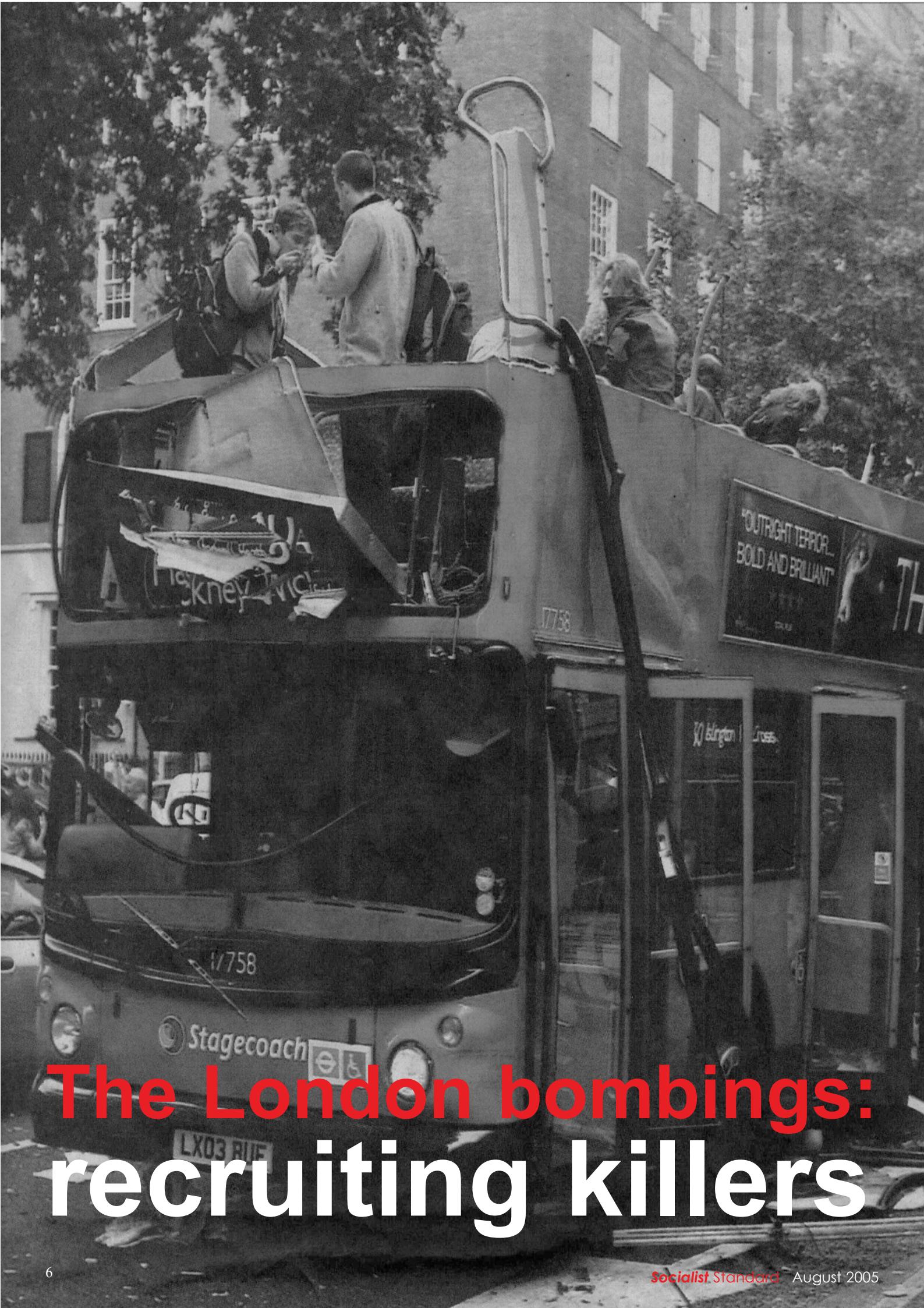
As I am sure you will agree, it is important to understand that wide-scale hunger and even famine can occur when the available food supplies are not necessarily less than sufficient to feed the people they should be intended for. For example the well-known study of the 1943 Bengal Famine by Amartya Sen, which I am sure you are familiar with, showed this clearly. Other famines in recent times have occurred when there has been a sufficiency of food. Indeed food exporting from Ethiopia continued during the famine of the 1980's.

It is also important to understand that not all the population of an area affected by hunger will go hungry. It is often what has been called 'entitlement' that denies access to the available food. Under the present way of ordering Society this entitlement can be determined by money or barter and not necessarily by a person's need for food. Having money alone that would ordinarily secure enough of the basics does not always ensure sufficient access to those basics as, for example, when there is a shortage caused by 'natural' or human factors. Generally, as with anything else, when there is perceived to be a shortage, the 'value' of goods and services (including food) rises. Because of the way things are ordered it is the poorest who suffer most when the price of commodities rises. Therefore Poverty can be said to cause hunger and hunger to cause poverty, because hunger weakens resistance to disease, which in turn leads to an increasing tendency to an inability on the part of its victims to tend to their needs.

As things are presently ordered, therefore, there is an advantage to those who control the availability of essentials and who in some way or other profit from their sale to regulate the supply of goods and services anywhere in the world.

If the products of human labour and indeed the plentiful raw materials throughout the world - including Africa - were freely available to those who needed them and indeed to those who help make them available for human consumption without the intervention of money or any other limiting factor imposed by a minority of humans then there could not be need of any kind, much less catastrophes like famines. Where there were factors held to be beyond the immediate control of humankind, for example floods or droughts, then the technology presently widely available could be used to ameliorate their worst effects. Water can be transported, sea water can be desalinated, rivers can, to some extent, be contained in their capacity to

continued on page 18



The London bombings: recruiting killers



Far left: the scene in Tavistock Square moments after the explosion. Left and below: relatives of suicide bomb victims in London and Iraq grieve their losses



t's not hard to see military recruitment going on. American comic books have full page adverts exhorting readers to become an 'Army of one'. Documentary-makers have followed US recruiters visiting poorer neighbourhoods offering education, prospects, a future. In the UK on high streets, recruiters put up boards showing abseiling, skiing, diving - anything other than riddling another human being with bullets or shrapnel.

The army has historically been a way out for the poor and powerless. A source of empowerment (or at least of feeling that someone somewhere is in control), of belonging, of being part of a corporate body and a story of positive action and values.

It's a tragic irony of humanity that the statues and memorials for military murderers are almost invariably bigger, better and more splendid than others. Battles - like Trafalgar - are commemorated, whereas anniversaries on the first use of anaesthetic would pass us by unmarked except by ultra-enthusiasts.

The glorification of those who die in battle is a near constant of any military society. London is disfigured with a war memorial dedicated 'To the glorious dead' - as if there was ever anything glorious about a nineteen-year old boy hanging on the barbed wire. To die nobly is often rewarded with a Victoria Cross. Dying in action is always referred to as sacrifice, a gift from the soldier to the community. For the First World War, Felicia Hemans' 'The boy stood on the burning deck, a poem about a young sailor dying at his post, was used in recruitment drives in this country.

The actions, then, of the four young men, three of them from Leeds, in callously slaughtering over fifty fellow humans, are not so alien as some would think at first. Shehad Tanweer, Hasib Hussain, Mohammed Sadiq Khan, from Leeds, were all described by their stunned friends and relatives, as perfectly ordinary, nice and polite young men. Not bug-eyed ranting fanatics.

The psychological hunt has begun to understand their motives - experts in terrorism discuss how suicide murderers require a wide support network to cajole and reassure them, assist them and point them in the right direction. People look to fanatical Islamic preachers, or the visits to Pakistan made by some of these boys when their families thought they were going off rails - trained in one of the Madrassa theological schools there.

The West Yorkshire metropolis - like many post-industrial northern towns - has deep cultural divisions. These were exposed some years back in 2001 with the Bradford riots, after which there were claims that the local Asians who turned out

to fight against fascists were given disproportionate sentences. The communities live in the same towns, but do not mix, and so distrust is sown between white-skinned and brown-skinned workers' families. Otherwise sensible people will tell tales of the shocking conduct of the other community.

These areas are scenes of depoliticisation - Leeds and Bradford have some of the lowest turnouts in elections. The area of Leeds that Tanweer was from has almost double the unemployment of other parts of the city. He himself left school with virtually no qualifications.

Relatives and friends talk of how young men who come back from Pakistan are shocked by the poverty they witness there. Others have talked of how it is not difficult to feel solidarity with the people they identify with - with Muslims who are oppressed in other parts of the world. They can draw a line between that poverty and oppression and their own experiences. It is not beyond wit or reason to see how these young men might become inclined to join up.

All it requires then is someone wealthy enough, organised enough to provide them with training and chemical explosives and equipment. Someone ruthless enough to be willing to send suicide murderers into crowds of people totally unconnected to their grievances simply to send a message to the powerful. Although it is unlikely the London attack was directly the responsibility of Saudi Arabian capitalist Osama Bin Laden, the profile of the leadership of the Islamic movement is very much one of aspirant, educated, relatively wealthy men from frustrated elites across the Arab world.

Just as rulers and wannabe rulers throughout the ages have used religion as a motivator, to provide the appearance of a common cause between them and their

potential recruits, so too do the modern day variety, attempting to build a coalition of people from many different backgrounds based on the historical experience of Islamic culture. Incorporating their local grievances into a single paranoid cloth whereby America, Zionists and 'crusaders' were the cause of all ills was an integral part of that project.

The left - monomaniacal as ever - see this as 'the violence of the oppressed', as objectively anti-imperialist. After the London bombings, the Socialist Workers Party studiously avoided condemning them. A chorus has gone up that Britain should change its foreign policy, pull out of Iraq and Afghanistan, to stop us being targets. This of course is no real solution - the war would go on if not here in other parts of the world - and young Yorkshires would travel to other parts of the world to join this fight. Terrorist insurgency is not an instinctive reaction to injustice, but a policy choice both for footsoldiers and generals alike.

Religion is the heart's cry of the oppressed, soul of a soulless world, it inspires utopian and thus reactionary politics. It cannot be stopped by suppression, harassment, the silencing of radical preachers - that would only aid and abet the feeling of persecution. It must be defeated by reason, by practical action to demonstrate that there are prospects for taking control of their own lives.

This means an open movement desperately needs to be built to create a real prospect of change, not just in the UK but in the world. We cannot rely on military force, or the state, the great and the good bullying moderate Muslims to speak out, it needs to come from the massed ranks of workers, set on using their creative industry to take real control of the world around us. An end to oppression, and an end to ambitious elites using human corpses as stepping stones to wealth and power. ■

Pik Smeet

Below: the glorious dead?

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J.N. PEART	J.M. PIRIHI	R.L. PRIAUX
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W.A.L. PEEBLES	W.PIRINI	H.J. PRICE
I.H. PEEK	H.H. PIRIPI	R.D. PRICE
M.PEEPE	F.PITCAIRTHY	L.R. PRIDAY
G.L. PEET	N.L. PITTEENDRICH	C.H.O. PRIEST
W.R. PEET	T.PITONI	E.G. PRIEST
J. PEEVERS	J.PITTMAN	E.J. PRINCE
P.REHI	R.PLASTER	J.PRINCE
E.T. PELLOW	R.H. PLANK	G.A. PRINDE
T.W.W. PENDRAY	W.J.PLANT	R.A. PRINGLE



The making of global poverty

Why is the Third World always third? Why are 'developing countries' still not developed, when the West is doing so well? Why are so many of them poor, and have they always been that way? Is it just their fault? A look at history reveals a different story, and one which explains the real origins of western prosperity.

It is sometimes called the Third World, though now expressions such as 'the South' or 'the Majority World' are felt to be more acceptable. Equally, 'developing countries' is seen as more accurate than 'underdeveloped'. Yet whatever label is used,

it cannot be denied that much of the Earth's population endure lives of poverty and squalor, of undernourishment that often crosses into famine, of insecurity and lack of opportunity. Their lives are often brutally short, with life expectancy far below that in wealthier countries (just 37 years in Sierra Leone, for instance, against a global average of 67 years). Each year around 14 million children die in the Third World, mostly from entirely preventable diseases. But such conditions have not always existed, nor has there always been such a chasm between rich and poor parts of the world. For capitalism created, or at least exacerbated, these inequalities, by the way in which it exploited pre-capitalist



Lavish - the British in India



Homo universalis impecuniensis - around since the dawn of property society

societies as it was expanding across the globe in search of markets, raw materials and labour.

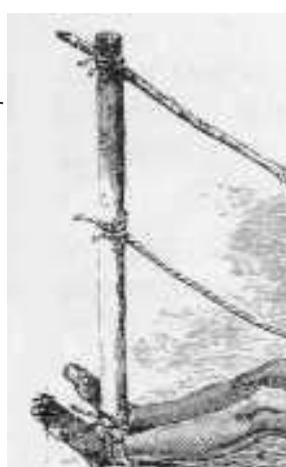
The slave trade, for instance, was perhaps the worst example - it can only euphemistically be called a 'trade'. Labour supplies were needed in the new colonies, especially in the Caribbean, but the native inhabitants were not strong or healthy enough to provide this. The solution was to ship labour power from Africa, not as 'voluntary' immigrants but as slaves, captured in battle or purchased from local rulers, transported in appalling conditions and forced to work

on plantations. British capitalism in particular benefited from the slave trade: its products and profits helped towns like Liverpool, Manchester and Bristol to develop industries such as shipbuilding, cotton processing and sugar refining, for colonies were forced to send their produce to England and forbidden to manufacture anything locally. Banks such as Barclays and Barings were set up with profits from slavery. 'The West Indian islands', says Eric Williams, writing of the late eighteenth century in Capitalism and Slavery, 'became the hub of the British Empire, of immense importance to the grandeur and prosperity of England.'

And at the same time Africa was impoverished, as it was usually the youngest and fittest who were abducted, thus depopulating the land and leaving the old or infirm, who could not cultivate the farms adequately. Africa's population scarcely grew between 1650 and 1900, while Europe's increased fourfold.

In addition, the Third World was a source of raw materials which fed the ever-growing demands of European

capitalism. Africa, for instance, supplied groundnuts, cotton and rubber (nowadays it's diamonds, timber, oil and rare metals). Profits from all this were repatriated, leading to further development in Europe rather than in Africa. Cotton goods and soft furnishings manufactured in India were enormously popular in seventeenth-century Europe. But the cloth industries in India, Africa and elsewhere were deliberately destroyed, primarily by British capitalism,



Putting business first

President George Bush II is nothing if not frank, at least on the Kyoto Treaty. Interviewed by Sir Trevor McDonald on the eve of last month's G8 summit (ITV, 4 July) he had this to say of this treaty which aims to timidly limit carbon emissions (one of the contributory causes of the current global warming):

"I made the decision . . . that the Kyoto treaty didn't suit our needs. In other words, the

Kyoto treaty would have wrecked our economy, if I can be blunt . . . I walked away from Kyoto because it would damage America's economy, you bet. It would have destroyed our economy. It was a lousy deal for the American economy."

As the head of US capitalism's political executive, his remit is to protect and further the interests of the US capitalist class. The reason why he and his advisers decided that the Kyoto Treaty would have damaged the US economy was that America gets a higher proportion of energy from burning coal and oil than its rivals, so that any commitment to use other, more expensive sources of energy

would have cost the US proportionately more than these rivals and so reduced its competitiveness vis-à-vis them.

That Kyoto would have advantaged their economies compared to America may even have been at the back of the minds of the European political leaders who promoted the treaty. If so, they miscalculated and may now find that it is their economies that are going to be disadvantaged.

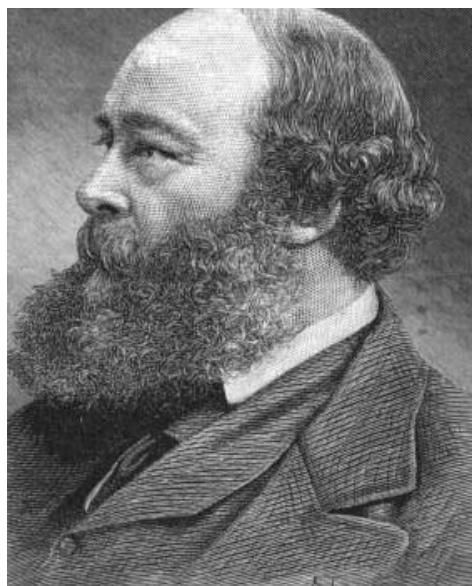
In any event, while it is clear that a question which concerns the whole world such as the possible consequences of global warming can be effectively dealt with only by unified action at a world level, it is equally clear that

both to do away with potential rivals and to open up new markets. In one area of the Philippines, for instance, the British vice-consul deliberately forced the replacement of locally-produced textiles with machine-made British ones, and encouraged production of sugar for export. All in all, Third World industry was undermined or at least kept on a low level while western capitalism forged ahead, partly on the basis of its colonial profits. In 1830, China was responsible for 30 percent of world manufacturing output, and India for 17 percent; by 1900, these shares were down to 6 percent and under 2 percent, respectively, while over the same period Europe's share rose from 34 percent to 63 percent.

The end of the nineteenth century saw widespread droughts and famines, the Late Victorian Holocausts of Mike Davis' book. Though figures can only be estimates, perhaps fifty million died in China, India and Brazil alone, as food was exported to the West, and local agriculture was disrupted by a mixture of ignorance and intent. In North Africa in the 1870s, peasants were forced to sell their livestock cheap to French dealers in order to stave off starvation in the short term. In other cases new taxes that had to be paid in money were introduced, forcing peasants to become wage-labourers. While the British rulers of India were lavishly celebrating Victoria's sixty years as queen in 1897, wheat was being exported to Britain or left to rot in railway sidings, and poorhouses were being set up to further punish the destitute. (The Socialist Party's predecessor organisation, the Social Democratic Federation, was the only grouping that consistently protested against the suffering being inflicted on India's peasants.)

One of the most notorious events of the Western creation of the Third World

was the Scramble for Africa (which can be roughly dated 1876-1912). This took place partly for strategic reasons: Britain needed to control both the Cape of Good Hope and the Suez Canal in order to ensure access to its Indian Empire. In addition, tropical produce was being exported to Europe, and there were many raw materials available cheaply - Germany needed access to cotton, oil, cocoa and rubber, for instance. Revenue could be boosted by taking over the tax and rental income of local 'chiefs', and forced labour



Salisbury - carving up Africa

could only increase profits. King Leopold of Belgium's exploitation of the Congo, supposedly carried out to do away with the remnants of slavery, was the most extreme example. Edmond Morel, the journalist who exposed the extent of Leopold's scheming, described what was happening as 'a secret society of murderers with a King for a croninan'. African rulers often gave their lands away in return for old rifles and strings of beads, or unknowingly signed a treaty in English or French that contained different provisions from that in the local language. Lord Salisbury, British Prime Minister during much of the Scramble, prided himself that Africa had been carved up with no European power firing a shot against another (and African troops employed by Europeans did much of the actual fighting against other Africans). Salisbury's policies served the British ruling class well:

'He had certainly made sure that the lion's share of new colonies and protectorates - fifteen out of thirty - went to Britain. If his preoccupation had always

been to give Britain the strategic advantage, it was fortunate for Britain that he also gave it most of Africa's most profitable territory: the gold-mines of the Transvaal, the teeming markets of the Niger, the tea and coffee of Uganda, the cotton of Egypt and the Sudan.' (Thomas Pakenham: *The Scramble for Africa*)

Thus British capitalism benefited at the same time as Africa was impoverished.

All in all, it cannot be argued that underdevelopment is due to Third World countries not (yet) enjoying the benefits of capitalism, that they have missed out on development by missing out on capitalism. The truth is that their current condition is a result of the role they played in the development of capitalism. Africa and many parts of Asia and South America, were colonised, formally or informally, for the sake of the European powers, whose ruling classes grew rich on the profits of this exploitation, in addition to the surplus value they extracted from workers 'at home'. ■

PAUL BENNETT

Africa: a Marxian Analysis

A 30-page pamphlet written by socialists living in Africa consisting mainly of reprints from *The Socialist Standard*. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis is applied to:

- State and class in pre-colonial West Africa
- Tribalism
- Colonialism and Capitalism
- Religion, Race and Class
- Sharia Law in Nigeria

■ Early 20th Century South Africa



Available from **The Socialist Party**, 52 Clapham High St., London SW4 7UN. £1 (£1.35 by post). Cheques payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain"

Sketch of a West African slave, c. 1887

Nobody cuts my emissions

this is not going to happen under capitalism. The different capitalist states into which the world is divided have different - and clashing - interests, such as have come to the surface over Kyoto, which they will always put first. At most, all that can happen under capitalism when a global problem arises is "much too little, much too late". That the leaders of the capitalist States of Europe are just as willing (if not just as frank about it) as Bush to put the interests of their capitalist class first when it comes to environmental problems was shown by a headline in the Times the following day: "Europe drops green agenda to put life back

into industry". The article reported that, under pressure from governments and from business lobbies, the European Commission has put off proposals to deal with the problem of air pollution:

"The shelving of the environment strategies marks a triumph for the British Government, which has called on the Commission to stop producing regulations that damage businesses. An impact assessment had suggested that the air-pollution strategy alone would cost between €5.9 billion and €14.9 billion a year from 2020". Enough said.

Enter the



**Women gluing training shoes without masks
in the world's largest sweatshop**

In 1978 the Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping embarked on reforms that would steer China's economy toward transition from state-run to free market capitalism.

Since then China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown by an average of 9.5 percent per year, faster than any other country. China joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in December 2001 and now accounts for 13 percent of world output with a GDP likely to overtake Japan by 2016 and America by 2020, making China the world's largest economy.

Economic "openness"

This prodigious growth is attributable to foreign investment that has utilised the country's remarkably 'liberal' business climate to exploit low wage labour as a platform for the manufacture of goods and then their export to world at cheap prices. Put simply, manufacturing has been relocated to China to undercut competition and raise profits - attracted by the almost 'inexhaustible' supply of cheap labour, well-developed infrastructure, tax concessions and brutally repressive state.

China's economic 'openness' makes it the world's largest recipient of foreign investment, which increased 35 percent in the year to September 2004 alone. It is further exemplified by the country's import tariffs, which "have, on average, fallen from 41 percent in 1992 to 6 percent after it joined the WTO in December 2001, giving it the lowest tariff protection of any developing country." (The Economist, 2 October 2004, p.6)

Joint ventures between Chinese companies and foreign multinational corporations produce 27 percent of manufacturing output (there are 4,000 involving UK companies alone) and a flourishing private sector accounts for 50 percent of Chinese GDP.

Rich v poor

Although most of the population still exists at basic subsistence levels, the purchasing power of a minority of better paid workers (but still measured in tens of millions) and the development of an

indigenous capitalist class have nurtured a sizeable domestic market. China in fact has the world's fastest growing consumer market and sales are soaring. If income distribution remains unaltered, "by 2020 the top 100 million households will have an average income equivalent to the current average in Western Europe. This will open up a vast market for consumer goods." (The Economist, 2 October 2004, p.11) An increasing number of American and European corporations are now investing to sell directly to this growing market.

China's market has also encouraged the emergence of a Chinese capitalist class, comprising many who already have close ties with foreign capital and political patronage from Beijing. Within this class a small number have amassed staggering levels of wealth.

This picture looks set to continue. Though productivity is still low compared with the developed world, running at approximately one-eighth of that in America, economic 'openness' is encouraging the rapid transfer of manufacturing technology that will enable China to use the industrialised countries as a springboard to raise productivity. Production will also rapidly climb the "value added" chain, utilising the 10 million graduates who join the Chinese working class each year.

But more important is the abundant supply of the resource essential to profits - human labour power. China has a population of 1.3 billion or 20 percent of the world's population and the political elite has worked hard to mobilise this labour power to create the conditions to fuel capitalism.

State industry has rapidly shrunk and thousands of enterprises have been sold or bankrupted and their workers sacked. An estimated 40 million have been made jobless to join the countless millions made redundant from native private industry by relentless foreign competition.

Town v country

In rural regions, where over 60 percent of the population still live, the free market deregulation of agricultural prices has driven millions from the land. Here, over 150 million destitute people are waiting to migrate and seek work at any

wage, while farmers are often compelled to take unskilled temporary work between harvests to supplement meagre earnings.

It will take 15-20 years to absorb this labour power, which means that, unlike some parts of South-East Asia, where labour scarcity could raise wages, Chinese based capitalism can probably hold down unskilled wages for many years.

To most the transition from state-run capitalism to the free market variety means low wages, poor living conditions and repression. While a minority of higher paid workers has access to consumable goods, the free market has devastated the lower paid who do not have money to buy those goods. Services including education and medical care, formerly provided by the state, are now 'fee based', while housing is controlled by private landlords.

The main manufacturing belt lies in the region of Guangdong and along the Pearl River Delta, where workers slave 15 hours a day, seven days a week with mandatory overtime enforced by coercive factory regulations. Migrant labour is estimated at over 100 million, more than half women from impoverished inland regions. Industrial disputes are not uncommon.

Contradictions

Sometimes disputes erupt into riots as happened at the Taiwanese Stella International factory at Dongguan in the spring of 2004. The factory, employing 70,000 workers, makes shoes for Nike, Reebok, Clarks, Sears and Timberland.

Migrant worker - China on the move



Dragon

Factory property was allegedly damaged and ten workers were subsequently jailed for 3½ years but later freed when the company, fearful of repercussions, secured their release.

Long-term disregard for poverty and the impoverished plight of working people and peasantry may well pose a significant threat to government authority. The government has been compelled to ameliorate worker conditions and in some places unemployment insurance has improved and minimum wages increased, while cities have endeavoured to increase employment - generally by offering assistance to new enterprises to employ redundant workers. But funding is still minimal and official corruption widespread.

Nowhere is the contrast between rich and poor more stark than in Shanghai, a city of 17 million and the centre of Chinese capitalism. Here poor living conditions, overcrowding and poverty are "...a far cry from the empty streets of the gated communities in the east end of Pudong, where high walls and a plethora of guards provide a safe, insular heaven for those living within." (China Daily, 28 April 2005)

One of China's main weaknesses is electricity generation and the rapid increase in demand, exacerbated by household appliances and air-conditioning, has caused shortages, blackouts and power rationing. China's electricity generation is 70 percent dependent on coal and miners were forced to increase output by 54 percent in the four years to 2003. Rudimentary safety is ignored and a twelve-hour day, 28 days a month is the industry standard. "There were more than 6,000 deaths last year from explosions, floods, cave-ins and other accidents in China's mining industry, accounting for 80 percent of the world's total fatalities. Independent estimates, however, say up to 20,000 workers are killed every year as they toil underground in poor conditions for little money." (<http://www.chinalaborwatch.org>)

The 'All China Federation of Trade Unions,' is the only legal trade union and controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Independent trade unions are banned and workers agitating for better conditions are routinely jailed. But despite the lack of organisation, skill shortages have enabled some to make gains after strikes, as in Shenzhen in October 2004 and Panyu in November 2004.

Knock-on effect

The 'Chinese miracle' has had a detrimental effect on many workers outside China. While the international class who

live by profits has benefited immeasurably by transferring operations to China, many workers in other countries have paid the price with the loss of their jobs. Worst hit have been workers who barely survive in undeveloped countries where imports and exports mirror those of China. The abolition of import quotas on textiles in January 2005, for example, is set to decimate jobs in Bangladesh and Cambodia where companies will be unable to compete. Another casualty has been the Mexican working class where an estimated 225,000 jobs, originally transferred from America after the introduction of the North America Free Trade Association have moved to China since 2001. Likewise, production transferred to South Korean and Taiwanese based corporations is 'out-sourced' to China for labour intensive assembly and then re-export.

But China's capitalism is also influencing the world's working class in other ways. Worker conditions in developed countries are under attack. As *The Economist* euphemistically puts it: "Individual countries can maximise their gains from Chinese integration and minimise their losses by making their own economies more flexible, increasing mobility between sectors and improving education." (2 October 2004, p.12).

Political control

The development of capitalism in China looks set to remain firmly under the political dictatorship of the Communist Party. Although in practical operation for years, free market capitalism was officially reconciled with 'communism' at the 16th National Congress of the CCP in November 2002 when the Party's constitution was amended to open membership to China's 'business elite' to protect the "legitimate rights and interests" of business and property owners. The CCP has become the instrument of multinational corporations and of this 'business elite' and seeks to perpetuate its rule with the support of those who benefit from the system of exploitation in the world's largest sweatshop. The Party has warned it will make no concession to 'democratic aspirations.' At the Central Committee meeting in September 2004, Hu Jintao, China's President and Party leader asserted that "China would never have its own Gorbachev," or countenance erosion of the CCP's ruling position. Denouncing those

who "fly the banner of democracy and political reform," he warned the Party would be "pre-emptive" and "strike when they rear their heads." (Time 31 January 2005, p.45).

In practical terms the political elite is seeking to tighten control over local government to block independent legislatures and plans to "improve the political thinking of university students to elevate the Party's ruling power" (People's Daily, 19 January 2005). Websites exposing corruption have been shut without explanation. Newspapers are banned from publishing anything negative about the



Hu Jintao - no concession to democratic aspirations

police, government or judiciary and journalists have been ordered to stop criticism.

In this way capitalism in China is an investors' paradise and a workers' prison camp. Enormous profits are attained at staggering human cost, and with the growing gap between rich and poor the class struggle is set to intensify. The integration of China into world capitalism has also had profound effects. It has drained away jobs from other parts of the world, lowered global unskilled wage rates and eased pressure on wages in other countries by reducing prices of consumable goods. These world-wide reverberations will continue. ■

STEVE TROTT



Eleanor Marx, Belfort Bax and "the Woman Question"

Through the pages Justice, the paper of the Social Democratic Federation, Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor and SDF member Belfort Bax hotly debated 'the woman question'

The barrister and writer Ernest Belfort Bax (1854-1925), even though he was a prominent member of the Social Democratic Federation and had even been for a while in the Socialist League with William Morris, was notoriously prejudiced against women, even to the extent of arguing against giving them the vote and of regarding them as being in a privileged position compared with men.

This was a very strange position to be taken up by the co-author with William Morris of *Socialism From the Root Up* or *Socialism Its Growth and Outcome* and of a number of other articles expressing socialist ideas. So strange in fact that his socialist credentials have to be challenged.

One person who did challenge him on the issue was Marx's daughter, Eleanor, then calling herself Eleanor Marx Aveling, adding to her name that of the man she was living with without being married.

Bax had written an article on "The Woman Question" that was published in the SDF's paper *Justice* in its 27 July 1895 issue (see <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bax/1895/07/woman.htm>). This expressed the position he summed up in a later article (30 November) as:

"(. . .) In conclusion I will give, once for all, in a few words my position on this question, cleared of the prejudice imported into it by railing accusations of woman-hating and other objectionable qualities.

1. I utterly dispute the validity of the attempted analogy between women as a sex and the proletariat as a class, on which analogy the plausibility of the "woman movement" for Socialists so largely rests.

2. While fully recognising the

oppression of the capitalist system on women as on men, I deny that, on the whole, it presses more on women than on men, as such.

3. Coming to the question of direct sex-tyranny, if we are to talk of this I am prepared to prove that, at least in all countries where the Anglo-Saxon is dominant, viz., in Britain and its colonies, in the United States, &c., it is invariably men who, both by law and public opinion, are oppressed in the supposed interests of women and not *vice versa*.

4. That the few (mainly formal) disabilities of women in politics or elsewhere which are perpetually being trotted out, are more than compensated for, by special privileges in other directions.

5. That the woman's rights agitation as hitherto conducted, in which the "brute man" plays the role of villain, was born of hysterics and "sour grapes," and is kept

"it is invariably men who are oppressed in the supposed interests of women and not vice versa"

alive by a bare-faced system of "bluff," and both the suppression and perversion of fact, intended to work on the sentimental male with a view of placing women in a safe citadel of privilege and sex-domination - the talk of equality being a mere blind. I am prepared to maintain any or all of these propositions in writing with anyone."

This sparked off a discussion in the paper's correspondence column and led to Eleanor Marx issuing the following challenge to Bax to debate the matter at a public meeting:

"Dear Comrade, - As JUSTICE, "the Organ of the Social Democracy," appears to adopt comrade Bax as the exponent on the *sex (not woman)* question, and as the subject is certainly one worthy consideration and debate, I desire, through your columns, to challenge my friend Bax to a public debate with me on the subject. The debate to take place in some hall in London before the end of the year, so that the proceeds of it (whether from payments for admission or collection on the evening) may be handed over to H. Quelch, hon. Treasurer of the Zurich Committee for the International Trades Union and Socialist Workers' Congress, 1896. The debate to follow the usual lines, 30 minutes on each side, and then two quarters of an hour for each speaker consecutively. Bax, as propounder of the general proposition, to open. Chairman to be mutually agreed upon.

- Fraternally yours,
ELEANOR MARX AVELING."

(*Justice*, 16 November 1895)

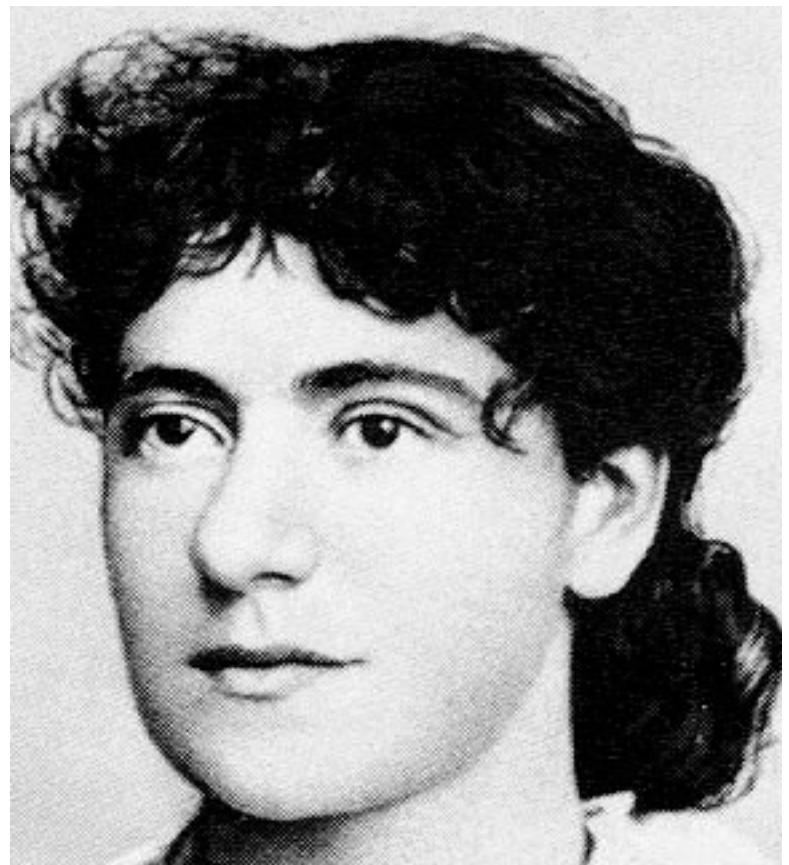
Bax turned down the proposal of a public debate and instead proposed a written exchange, as the following item from the 23 November issue of *Justice* reported:

"Mrs. Aveling sends us the following for publication: -

National Liberal Club,
Whitehall Place, S. W.
Saturday.

Dear Mrs Aveling, - I am perfectly ready to undertake a debate on the woman question in writing with you or any other accredited representative of "Woman's Rights", but I am too little *au fait* with oratorical tricks and platform claptrap to be able to successfully defend the most simple

*Far left: Ernest Belfort Bax.
Right: Eleanor Marx
Aveling*



and obvious propositions under the conditions proposed even if there were no shrieking crowd against which my voice would find it impossible to contend.

I will enter upon a literary debate on similar lines to that I had with Bradlaugh on Socialism, and shall be pleased to arrange for such a discussion. My weapons in this controversy are fact and argument and not ill-manners and name-calling either direct or indirect. This being so I naturally prefer the written method, when fact and argument are "ausschlaggeben." - Yours sincerely,

E. BELFORT BAX.

To the above the following reply has been sent: -

**Green Street Green,
Orpington,
Nov. 19, 1895.**

Dear Bax, - I am in receipt of your letter (undated). I offered to debate with you on the Sex Question. I am, of course a Socialist, not a representative of "Woman's Rights". It is the Sex Question and its economic basis that I proposed to discuss with you. The so-called "Woman's Rights" question (which appears to be the only one you understand) is a bourgeois idea. I proposed to deal with the Sex Question from the point of view of the working class and the class struggle.

I may remind you that "tricks" and "claptrap" are not confined to the platform. There are, as you know, literary tricks and journalistic claptrap. With a fair and able chairman there would be no shrieking crowd; and you have no more right to assume that those holding the views I should attempt to put forward would "shriek" than I have to assume that your supporters would howl. I remind you that you recently gave an address, followed by an open debate, upon this very subject, at Essex Hall, Strand. I fail to see, therefore, why you do not take up my challenge now. I here repeat it, and will, if you wish it,

debate at Essex Hall. And if you still refuse I shall give a lecture, probably at the Athenaeum Hall, Tottenham Court Road, some Saturday in December, on "Mr Bax and the Sex Question". The proceeds of this lecture will be given to the Zurich Committee Fund for the International Socialist and Trade Union Congress to be held in London in 1896. - Yours faithfully,

ELEANOR MARX AVELING."

Eleanor Marx went ahead with her lecture, with the following notice appearing in *Justice* of 7 December:

The Sex Question
Eleanor Marx Aveling
will lecture on
"Mr. Bax and the Sex Question"
at the
**ATHENAEUM HALL,
73, Tottenham Court Road.**
At 8 P.M., on
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21st, 1895.
Admission 1s, 6d, and 3d.
All proceeds go to the funds of the
Zurich Committee,
International Socialist Workers and Trade
Union Congress,
London, 1896.

Unfortunately, no report of what she said appeared in *Justice*, so we can only surmise, from the hints in the above letters, that she would have analysed the "Woman's Rights" movement as one of woman property-owners to secure equal rights with men property-owners and argued that women workers were exploited alongside men workers and that both should join together in waging the class struggle that would eventually end in the establishment of socialism which would be "a society in which all the means of production are the property of the community, a society which recognises the full equality of all without

distinction of sex" as she and Aveling quoted from Bebel's *Woman-Past, Present and Future* which they jointly reviewed for the *Westminster Review* in 1886 (see <http://www.marxists.org/archive/eleanor-marx/works/womanq.htm>).

Bax insisted on having the last word, accusing Eleanor Marx of having refused to debate in writing, while in fact it was he who had refused her challenge to a public oral debate (despite being a barrister), and re-iterating his prejudiced views on women:

"Dear Comrade, - Now that the "Woman" controversy in JUSTICE is over, and that Mrs. Aveling has prudently shirked my offer to meet her in debate on mutually fair terms, I should be obliged if you will allow me to state that I am still prepared to debate in writing on the basis of the five points laid down by me in my last JUSTICE letter on the subject, with any representative advocate of (so-called) "Woman's Rights" (i.e., the further increase of the sex-privileges of women), or with any representative Socialist who is opposed to me in this question . . . (*Justice*, 4 January, 1896).

Bax, incidentally, wrote his letters from the National Liberal Club, an all-male establishment (of course) which included leading members of the Liberal Party, to which the SDF was supposed to be implacably opposed. Henry Hyndman, the SDF's leader, was also a member, an indication of how reformist the top leaders of the SDF had become.

It only remains to add that things ended tragically for Eleanor Marx, who committed suicide in 1898, at the age of 43, after she learned that Aveling had gone off with another woman. ■

Adam Buck

THIS IS WHAT'S WRONG WITH CAPITALISM

It often strikes a socialist that so many of the criticisms of socialism are indeed valid, but only when applied to capitalism. I've heard it said, "socialism may sound fine in theory, but it wouldn't work out in practice." One wonders exactly what is meant by "working out in practice". If it means failure to solve the major social problems, then capitalism has worked wonders in practice, especially, as it creates problems it cannot solve. "But", they explain, "socialism would create chaos." By this, one assumes that war, depression, mass unemployment, destruction of the environment, epidemics of preventable diseases, famine and genocide, are not symptoms of a society in chaos.

Many equate socialism with dictatorship, yet, with the coming of the modern industrial state, most of the world's population has lived under dictatorship. After World War II, more lived under it than before; but it was fought, "to make the world safe for democracy." Even today, after the fall of the east European dictatorships, many countries have some form of repressive government.

We are told that individual freedom will suffer in a socialist society; yet how splendid it is to be free under capitalism. Free to be unemployed, free to starve (which a lot of the world's population are doing.) Free to breathe polluted air.

"But socialism will bring regimentation and uniformity," our critics say. I often look at rows and rows of stereotyped apartment buildings and notice the lack of uniformity. I'm sure many workers



have been unable to raise the capital to even start and, many who have been successful, have later gone bankrupt. It's no wonder so many feel insecure. It would be a wonder if they didn't.

In a socialist society where the tools of production will be used, first and foremost, to provide all with the necessities of life and where all stand equal in relation to

them, there will be nothing to prevent full rein being given to human creativity. All will be free to develop their personalities and various abilities to the fullest possible facet, and all will contribute according to their various skills and abilities. The premise of production will be based on serving humankind and from this, people will get a satisfaction unknown under capitalism.

It will reach a point where, as Oscar Wilde said, "A man will be known for what he is, not for what he has." ■
STEVE SHANNON

Cooking the Books (2)

Is Brown's luck running out?

When Gordon Brown boasted at last year's Labour Party conference that "no longer the country of mass unemployment, Britain is now advancing further and faster to full employment than at any times in our lives" he must have realised that he was giving a hostage to fortune. Or perhaps, since he also claimed that "no longer the stop-go economy, Britain is now enjoying the longest period of sustained economic growth for 200 years", he had deluded himself that, as the thus self-proclaimed best Chancellor of the Exchequer since 1805, he really was able to control the levels of production, prices and unemployment in Britain.

Whatever the reason, last month's business headlines must have begun to shake his confidence in his infallibility. "Inflation at its highest point for 7 years", reported the Times (13 July) and, the next day, "Question

mark over UK growth as jobless claims rise".

Reporting on this Gabriel Rozenberg, the Times' Economics Reporter, wrote: "Fears that the slowing economy is triggering a sustained rise in unemployment have intensified after the number of people claiming jobless benefits rose for a fifth month in a row . . . The last time the count rose for five consecutive months was in 1992 . . . The Government's preferred survey-based measure of unemployment fell by 4,000 in the three months to May, the Office for National Statistics said. But analysts said that at 1,426,000, the measure was still 43,000 higher than in August last year. Employment fell by 72,000 in the same period, the biggest drop since 1993".

What amounts to "mass" unemployment can be a matter of opinion, but 1,426,000 unemployed (plus many more on incapacity benefit or paid to do nothing on various "job creation" schemes) would have been regarded as such in the 50s, 60s and 70s.

Another indication that Gordon Brown's luck at having been Chancellor during an unusually long period of recovery may be beginning to run out was the headline a couple of days previously "Manufacturers bear the cost of surging oil prices":

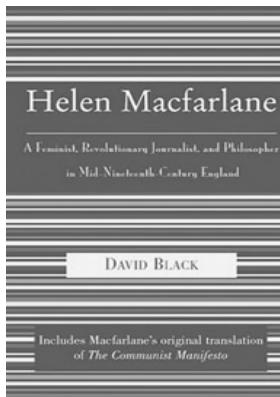
"Surging oil prices have forced up

manufacturers' costs by the fastest rate for 20 years, tightening margins, official figures showed yesterday". This led, reported Gabriel Rozenberg (Times, 12 July), to input prices going up by 2.3 percent between May and June. "The rise meant that manufacturers' costs for goods have risen 12.1 percent in the year to June, the largest annual rise since March 1985, but weak consumer demand has made it difficult to raise prices". Output prices actually fell 0.2 percent in June. As one analyst put it, this was "good news for high street goods inflation, but not for profits".

Since capitalism runs on profits and responds to changes in the rate of profit (rather than to consumer demand, as the popular defence of capitalism claims), this could be a serious development. Anything more than a merely passing fall in profit margins is bound to translate itself sooner or later in falling production, rising unemployment and falling consumer demand. When this happens, Brown will discover that governments don't, and can't, control the way capitalism works and that he hadn't discovered a magic formula for preventing the boom-slump cycle and engineering sustained growth.

A Rare Bird

Helen Macfarlane. A Feminist, Revolutionary Journalist, and Philosopher in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England. By David Black, Lexington Books, 2004. £15.



Morton for the Chartist George Julian Harney. It was in Harney's weekly newspaper *Red Republican* in 1850 that Macfarlane produced the first English translation of what became known as the *Communist Manifesto*. In the German original it was called *Manifesto of the Communist Party* but in the *Red Republican* its title was *German Communism: Manifesto of the German Communist Party*. Black is critical of this name change because the insertion of the word "German" into the title twice over "de-emphasises its internationalist thrust." But this misses the point of the change, a reason the *Red Republican* seems to have understood but which is now widely misunderstood. That is, while the theoretical parts of the *Manifesto* have universal application the practical proposals (particularly at the end of Section 2) were put forward with Germany in mind at that time. That is why Marx and Engels later said that some parts of the *Manifesto*, particularly in Section 2, were obsolete (see the Preface to the German edition of 1872).

In the *Red Republican* version of the *Manifesto*, some parts are missing and others changed mainly to suit its English readership. In the 1888 English translation, supervised by Engels, the famous opening line begins: "A spectre is haunting Europe. The spectre of Communism." But in Macfarlane's translation this becomes: "A frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe. We are haunted by a ghost. The ghost of Communism." Black states that her use of "hobgoblin" rather than "spectre" is unfortunate, but it is possible that her English readers at that time more readily understood the hobgoblin metaphor.

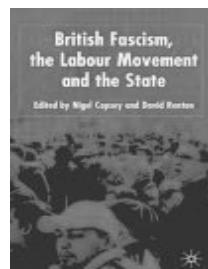
Marx called Macfarlane "a rare bird" - "the only collaborator on his [Harney's] spouting rag who had original ideas." She was the first person to translate and explain in English the work of the German philosopher Hegel. She wrote a few other articles for the *Red Republican* in the 1850s but almost nothing is known of her in the years before or after. What seems certain however is that Macfarlane could be described as the first British Marxist, a generation before that term came into use.

LEW

Fascism in Britain

Martin Pugh: Hurrah for the Blackshirts! Fascists and Fascism in Britain Between the Wars. Jonathan Cape. £20.00.

Nigel Copsey and David Renton, eds: British Fascism, the Labour Movement and the State. Palgrave Macmillan. £50.00.



These two books are not recommended for the various views expressed by the authors and contributors, but for the wealth of information, much of it new, on British Fascism.

The first fascisti, under the leadership of Benito Mussolini, was founded in Italy in 1914; Britain's first Fascist organisation emerged in May, 1925, six months after Mussolini's coup. It, too called itself Fascisti, but the following year changed its name to the British Fascists. Most of its leaders were aristocrats or men from military or naval backgrounds. They were militantly anti-Jewish and, through endorsement by such newspapers as the *Times*, *Morning Post* and the *Daily Mail*, believed in a worldwide Jewish conspiracy as portrayed by the infamous forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. The British fascists soon, however, split into even more extreme sects such as the National Fascisti and Arnold Leese's Imperial Fascist League.

Martin Pugh demonstrates in considerable detail the close connections between the Fascist groups and parties and rightwing, and even "mainstream", conservative politicians. The Fascists were often looked upon as more decisive Tories who wanted a more powerful, corporate state which would, hopefully, keep the "lower orders" in control and stop "alien" immigration. Many members of the Conservative Party would also be members of one of the fascist groups at the same time. Both could be depended upon to defend the Nation and the Empire. Indeed, between the two world wars, not a few members of the Royal family, including the then Prince of Wales, were sympathetic to Mussolini's Fascism and later Nazi Germany. Winston Churchill expressed admiration for Mussolini, and the Prince of Wales had Nazi friends.

Of course the Fascists opposed the General Strike of 1926. In fact, as Pugh notes, they were particularly enthusiastic anti-strike volunteers, enrolling in the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, and as Special Constables. Chief constables welcomed the Fascists, but only as individuals and not as uniformed members of Fascist parties as these had hoped.

In 1920, the Conservative Member of Parliament, Oswald Mosley, crossed the floor to sit as an independent; in 1924, he joined the Labour Party. His views were already interventionist, corporatist, almost

Fascist, but he was enthusiastically welcomed into the Labour Party. By 1929, Mosley was appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, but he soon resigned, and in February 1931 he launched his New Party. Then in 1932, after visiting Rome, he founded the British Union of Fascists. The BUF adopted the Corporate State, with the abolition of political parties, as its official policy. At this stage, Mosley and the BUF looked to Italy for their model, and it was not until 1936 that the BUF became pro-Nazi. Pugh notes that Mosley regularly visited Italy, and was rewarded with funding by Mussolini for several years. Mosley did not meet Hitler until 1935. During this period, the British Union of Fascists, which added the phrase "and National Socialists" to its title, became increasingly anti-Jewish. The BUF was organised militarily, complete with uniforms until these were banned in 1936. For a number of years, the *Daily Mail*, owned by Lord Northcliffe, supported the BUF and promoted Fascism.

Besides the BUF, there were still a number of small Fascist parties, as well as various "front" groups such as the January Club and Anglo-German Fellowship and, later, the Link. As in the 1920s, such groups had many Tories, rightwing and mainstream, as members. Indeed, most Conservatives, in Parliament and the country at large, were either pro-Fascist Italy, pro-Nazi Germany or, like Neville Chamberlain, appeasers, as Martin Pugh demonstrates in some detail. Many of them continued to hold similar ideas even after Britain had declared war on Germany, on 3 September, 1939. In 1940, Oswald Mosley, as well as about 800 Fascists and others considered to be pro-German, were arrested and imprisoned. But by 1942, most had been released. Mosley was conditionally released from prison in 1944. The BUF had been banned in June, 1940.

British Fascism, the Labour Movement and the State is a collection of fairly short and diverse essays by various authors. Richard Maguire discusses the use of Fascists by the Conservative Government in defence of what Stanley Baldwin called the "community" in defeating the miners, and during the General Strike of 1926. And, as noted in Pugh's book, the authorities were more than prepared to use Fascists as strike-breakers, their views being that the Fascists could be depended upon as Special Constables and the like.

Richard Thurlow outlines the formation of the Security Service (MI5), and its collaboration with Special Branch in surveillance of the Communist Party, and Comintern agents in Britain, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s. After about 1933, MI5 and Special Branch began to interest themselves in the British Union of Fascists, which hitherto they had not done. Interestingly, Thurlow points out that Maxwell Knight of MI5 had himself been the British Union of Fascists' Director of Intelligence in 1927. Graham Macklin discusses the attitude of the police and magistrates towards the Fascists in their confrontations with the Communists, and shows that in general they were more sympathetic towards the Fascists than the Communists. Not surprisingly, Oswald Mosley was particularly effusive in his support for the police, many of whom were anti-Jewish. Philip Coupland outlines what he calls "left-wing fascism", in which the BUF use leftwing terminology to attract

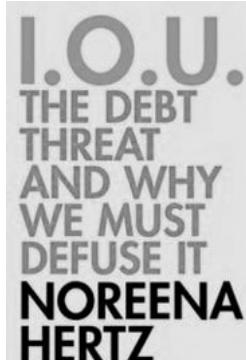
workers and disillusioned Labourites and Communists. In parts of the country this was quite successful.

David Renton discusses the so-called anti-Fascism, during the 1974-79 period, by such organisations as the Anti-Nazi League, the Trade Unions and the SWP, all of which from a socialist viewpoint achieved nothing in defeating fascist ideas and activities. Indeed, a party like the BNP today probably has as much support as did the BUF in 1935. Possibly more.

PEN

Borrowers and Lenders

Noreena Hertz: I.O.U.: The Debt Threat and Why We Must Defuse It. Harper Perennial £7.99.



form of capitalism in contrast to a laissez-faire version that sidelined justice and democracy.

The book under review focusses on developing-country debt and its consequences, not just for the Third World but for 'advanced' capitalist countries too. For debt and possible defaults can lead to desperation and terrorism, environmental damage and general economic recession. During the 'Cold War', loans were often made for strategic reasons, to keep countries friendly, whether US loans to Latin America or Russian and Chinese lending to Africa. The collapse of Eastern European state capitalism brought a sudden end to this, with loans being called in and new lending being on much less favourable terms. Hertz gives a good account of many of the mechanisms by which lending occurs, such as the roles of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Many Western countries have export credit agencies that underwrite sales by domestic companies and step in to pay them if anything goes wrong (so much for the risks of entrepreneurship). There are even traders who buy and sell developing-country debt as if it were pork or oil, usually making vast profits in the process.

In 2004, the world's poorest countries owed \$458 billion. The consequences of this seem pretty devastating:

"Millions of children continue to die every single year because money that could be spent on preserving their health is still being spent on debt service. Millions of children are prevented from attending school because money that could be spent on their education is still being spent on repaying debt."

Hence the demand to 'Drop the Debt!', and Hertz's proposals for deciding when debt is illegitimate and should be cancelled, plus

her suggestions of 'new principles for borrowers and lenders'.

The problem is that all such proposals effectively accept the status quo, i.e. global capitalism. They do not even begin to address the question of why people are poor in the first place. The passage quoted above assumes that money spent on repaying debts would otherwise be used for health care and education, but there is no guarantee of this at all: governments in developing countries, like all governments, run affairs in the interests of the ruling class. In a world rooted in ownership of resources by a tiny minority of the population, poverty, famine, and lack of access to decent health care and education are inevitable. Cancelling debt (which is anyway less costly to the lenders than might at first appear) relates to just one aspect of the way in which the basic inequality of capitalism reveals itself. It does not affect underlying causes - which is why, whatever the sincerity of those who support it, it will make no contribution to ending poverty.

PB

Léninised and Lionised

Marx And Other Four-Letter Words. Edited by Georgina Blakeley and Valerie Bryson, Pluto Press, 2005.



The authors and one of their previous collaborations

Being a collection of essays by academics for their students, this volume examines Marx's key concepts: capitalism, class, the state, oppression, revolution, equality and democracy, and more. There are numerous books of this type and most of the chapters do a reasonable job of reconstructing Marx's thought. However, Paul Blackledge's chapter on Revolution treats Marx and Lenin as though they were complementary. This is the standard Leninist line put forward by Blackledge:

"While Marx and Engels laid down some general guidelines for building a workers' party, they did not develop these into a fully worked out theory: this task was taken up by later Marxists, notably Lenin..."

Paraphrasing Lenin himself, the author claims that Lenin's State and Revolution (published in 1917) "returned to the works of Marx and Engels" and explained their ideas on revolution. But this untrue. Marx and Engels' insistence on working class self-emancipation specifically rules out what would become later known as Leninism, the idea that the working class were incapable of self-emancipation and must be freed by a Leninist vanguard party. This is in fact the exact opposite of Marx and Engels' position.

As the chapter on Working-Class Internationalism quotes Marx: "numbers weigh only in the balance if united by combination and led by knowledge." And the chapter on Democracy, quoting another commentator on Marx in the twentieth century, declares: "the terrible fate which befell Marx was that he was Leninised."

LEW

Wronging the Rights

The Ruling Asses. By Stephen Robins. Prion Books. ISBN 1-85375-572-9. £6.99.

The Ruling Assess will certainly make you laugh but, on the other hand, the thoughtful reader might be disturbed by the identity of the people who have provided the utterly absurd quotations that make up the book's 216 pages.

The clue is in the sub-title: "A little book of political stupidity" and the people who have unconsciously provided the stupidities are prominent politicians; the very 'they' in that ubiquitous opinion that 'they will [have to] do something about it.'

Beneath the amusing picture on the front page is a quote from the redoubtable Mr John Prescott, The Minister for Transport and current Labour Deputy Prime Minister. 'I want to wrong that right', says Mr Prescott. The book's editor, Stephen Robins, in giving Prescott pride of place, so to speak, sees the obvious humour in this particular piece of asininity but, on the other hand it could be a serious comment on the vicious authoritarianism of the present Labour government.

There can be no doubt about the mental state of the man whose absolute pearls of frightening ignorance wins him top spot in this collection: George W Bush, the President of the most powerful nation on Earth and the man with control of the nuclear button. George's father, we learn from his generous representation in this collection of absurdities, was the equal of his son in the mouthing of verbal inanities. This reduces the present great man to a sort of second generation idiot and perhaps poses the question as to why the American establishment, which boasts a 'smart' bomb, should afflict itself with such stupid presidents.

The collection is well indexed and the fact that the index contains 8 pages of names at 2 columns to the page means that your favourite politician is likely to be included - though, in fairness to the unique stupidities of the Bushes, father and son, it should be pointed out that they share some 124 listings in a work where, for example, the home-based political nutter, Ian Paisley, can only achieve 7.

This is a very funny book and an easy read but it frighteningly exposes the cash nexus in what passes for democracy in capitalist society where the means of winning elections is a commodity.

RM

Film Review

The Edukators. The Warwick Cinema, Carlisle

Co-written and directed by Hans Weingarten, the eponymous heroes of this film are two young men - radicals, we might perhaps call them - who seem to have fused feng shui with Situationism to create a stylish and esoteric new form of political protest. Their method is to break into the homes of the rich but, rather than steal, they move the furniture into new spaces, or rearrange it into new forms, to create a visual spectacle designed to shock the occupants out of their cash-

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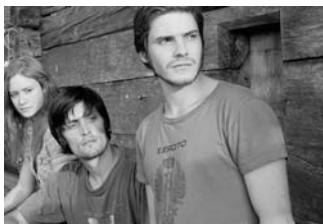
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encrusted apathy. Like high-class cat burglars, they leave prominent calling cards stating 'the days of plenty are numbered' or 'you have too much money,' and later read of their exploits in the newspapers.



Played by Daniel Brühl (Jan) and Stipe Erceg (Peter), it starts to go wrong for the Edukators when, unknown to Peter, his girlfriend, Jule, and Jan become an item (never let a woman spoil a good relationship, the film seems to imply). Witness to police brutality, bullied by her manager, bullied by her landlord, and crippled by debt, Jule has been sufficiently radicalised by these experiences to align herself with Peter and Jan and become the unofficial third Edukator.

The kind of Spectaclesque rich-bashing they engage in may leave some of their older victims remembering that there's a beach beneath their gravel driveway. Indeed, after the Edukators have been forced to abduct one of their victims they learn that he was once a radical who rubbed shoulders with the prominent Lefties in the glory days of '68. Now a rich entrepreneur, the Edukators - and the audience - are moved to wonder if his revolutionary ideals are now dead, or just dormant. During his captivity he befriends Jan, Jule and Peter; cooking for them, washing their clothes, sharing their

drugs, and it seems that the accumulated detritus of thirty years in the business world begins to fall away to reveal, to some extent, the idealist he once was, or at least a more benign capitalist, a Scrooge on Christmas morning. The Edukators suspect his motives and are alarmed by their developing friendship with their class enemy and 'hostage'. His abduction by the Edukators becomes his education, and he parts company with his captors on friendly terms, letting bygones be bygones and, more importantly, promising not to contact the authorities. But some leopards never change their spots...

To some extent the film is reminding us of the generally perceived view that youthfulness and radicalism seem to go hand in hand, whilst 'ageing' and 'conservative' are words which frequently keep each other company. There are many people who claim to have been socialists back in the sixties, yet after a few pints confess that Enoch was right. And some know, and some even perhaps are, former radicals who now vote New Labour and watch the world go by from behind the Financial Times.

As *The Edukators* should have tried to explore more often, there are probably many reasons why youthful would-be smashers of the state mature into upholders of the status quo. It is often the case that self-styled radicals were never radical in the first place, and a promising career is a great incentive for abandoning one's revolutionary ideals. But as Socialist Party members will evince, radicalism never dies: it simply loses its dress sense.

Neil Windle

Fifty Years Ago

LABOUR PARTY PROGRAMME FOR THE YEAR 2000

The idea of encouraging the donkey forward by dangling a carrot a short distance in front of his nose is an ancient one but even the oldest tricks can be changed and Mr. Albu, Labour M.P. for Edmonton, has discovered a startling variation.

Like other Labour M.P.s he has had to realise that the Labour electoral carrot offered to the voters in the recent General Election was not successful in enticing them to the polling booth for 1,500,000 of former Labour voters this time refused to go in and put their cross. So Mr. Albu, who is a member of the Executive Committee of the Fabian Society, has been thinking up a new programme for Labour. He spoke about it at a meeting of the Central London Fabian Society on June 29. He said:-

"There should be adequate incentives, but property ownership should be reduced by estate duties and a capital gains tax so that by the year 2000 the distribution of inherited wealth would be similar to that of taxed income today." (*Manchester Guardian*, 30 June, '55)

Mr. Albu is not proposing that inequality of accumulated wealth be eliminated but only that it should be lessened, so that it would not exceed the smaller, but still very great, difference between the annual income of the rich man and the wages of the poor. So we progress! Many years ago the Fabian Society, and later the Labour Party, planned to do something "immediately" about this inequality. Now Mr. Albu suggests postponing the completion of half a plan until a date 45 years ahead, by which time most of the present generation will be dead.

From *The Socialist Standard*, August 1955



cause widespread damage to the lives of people who happen to live in their flood plains.

Presently some African countries are troubled by, among other things, wars, corrupt government as well as crop failure due to drought and other factors. To some extent many other parts of the world have also been affected in similar ways over the last few centuries. The 'debt' that is owed by many countries in Africa and elsewhere is often at least in part due to the efforts of other countries to trade with them. With things ordered as they presently are - in other words governed by money - there is no incentive for traders with Africa or anywhere else to be 'fair'. These traders are bound by the same rules all traders in the present system are - i.e. to maximise their profit in trading with anyone. If they were 'fair' they would quickly go out of business because their profits would decline.

Therefore 'wiping out' present debts is no guarantee of a long term solution to the poverty that has been more or less imposed on many African countries. Rather the abandoning of the money system itself by the entire world

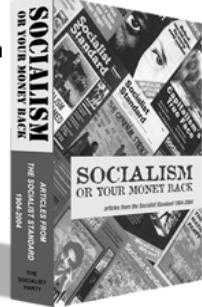
and sharing the resources of the earth in common is the only real way. Perhaps those countries that have experience in combating the worst effects of droughts could be called upon to help. There are many examples of international co-operation at present under the money system, Space Exploration to name one large one. Another example near to my home is the construction of the Thames Barrier, which utilised the expertise of the Dutch in Flood Defences, the Americans in producing heavy duty waterproof bearings for the gates, the British with their expertise in large scale steel structures, and Austrians with other necessary skills. If this can all be done now, with money as a limiting factor - imagine what could be done when the entire world is united in the will to solve the problems any other area may suffer! We could all share the skills and resources we all have in plenty for the benefit of all humanity! Imagine what kind of world that could be!

Yours,
Tony Norwell, London SE2

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Meetings

Swansea

Monday 8 August, 7.30pm

POST-WAR LABOUR GOVERNMENT 1945-51: HOPE AND BETRAYAL

Speaker: Steve Trott

Unitarian Church, High St, Swansea

Chiswick

Tuesday 16 August, 8pm

THE COMMODIFICATION OF CULTURE

Speaker: Adam Buick

Committee Room, Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace
(corner Sutton Court Road), W.4 (nearest tube:
Chiswick Park).

Norwich

Saturday 20 August, 12 noon

Welcome and informal chat for new visitors

1pm: Meal

2pm: Question(s)/discussion on theory

3-4pm: Question(s)/discussion on practice

The Conservatory, back room of The Rosary Tavern,
Rosary Road, Norwich

Central London

Bank Holiday Monday, 29 August, 8pm

THE CASE FOR SOCIALISM

Speaker: John Bissett

Upstairs Room, Carpenters Arms, Seymour Place (near Marble Arch), W1 (nearest tube: Marble Arch).

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

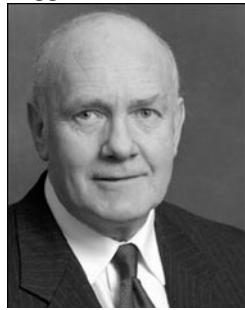


The Outsider

The bookies would not have been overjoyed at the result of the election, seeing as the favourite came in with a clear lead over the rest of the field. The likes of William Hill had hardly had time to tot up their losses after Labour's "historic" (as they keep reminding us) third successive victory than they had to get on with calculating the odds for the leadership contests of both the big parties. In the case of the Tories the outlook for the bookies is not so gloomy because there is likely to be quite a large field of runners, even if Territorial Army ex-SAS hero David Davis will probably be a narrow favourite. But the race for the Labour leadership promises to be more menacing, with Gordon Brown another odds-on favourite who will cost the bookies some money if he finally, after all those years of manoeuvring, in-fighting and hostile briefing, gets to stand smiling on the doorstep at Number Ten.

Except that, as Brown himself - and the bookies - know all too well, it is not that simple. In organisations like the Labour Party there are very, very few MPs who do not regard themselves as likely candidates for the leadership. To illustrate this point: when Tony Blair announced he would eventually hand over the reins the Guardian columnist Simon Hoggart played a cruel joke to expose the vanity lurking in the unlikeliest of breasts. He asked a low-ranking Labour minister, who does not have a shred of realistic hope of becoming his party's leader, whether he should consider making himself available for nomination. At first the minister demurred but a little more flattery from Hoggart awakened his atrophied

ambitions. He murmured that now he came to think of it he had recently been approached by quite a few MPs. Hoggart did not tell us what has happened to that hapless man in the reshuffle.



Reid

He may have found some consolation in history. When Anthony Eden resigned the Tory leadership in 1957 the front runner to take over was R A Butler and little

attention was given to the chances of Harold Macmillan. But in the event all the energy Macmillan had expended over the years in seeing off his rivals brought him success. When Macmillan in his turn resigned in 1964 Butler was again a favourite for the succession, with Hailsham not so well fancied. But Alec Douglas-Home came from the back of the field to take the job. The Labour Party in the 1930s was led by George Lansbury, who at the party conference in 1935 won a standing ovation for his speech in a debate on the sanctions against Italy for the attack on Ethiopia. Lansbury's speech was flavoured by phrases like "I am ready to stand as early Christians did and say 'This is our faith'" but he was emphatically defeated in the vote, which left him little choice but to resign. The main contenders for the job - the favourites - were Herbert Morrison and Arthur Greenwood but they were beaten by Clement Attlee who, as the outsider, was rated as mousy and colourless but who turned out to be nothing like that when it came to doing the job of Prime Minister.

So who are the outside chances now, in the contest to replace Blair? Prominent among them is Dr. John Reid, MP for Airdrie and Shotts where, as the saying goes, they weigh the Labour votes rather than count them. What is Reid's form as a

"he loves taking the salute at military march pasts"

leadership contender? By the standards of the Labour Party, it is pretty strong. In 1973 he joined the Communist Party and later CND but then went over to the Labour Party and a job as one of their research officers, followed by a stint as political adviser to Neil Kinnock - which, in view of Kinnock's well-earned reputation for political blunders and electoral disasters, Reid would do well to gloss over. He got into Parliament in 1987, for Motherwell North which, through various changes of name, has been held by him ever since with never less than 61 per cent of the vote. His resignation from CND provoked approval from Julian Lewis, the famously combative right-wing Tory MP for New Forest East, who wrote to the Sunday Express in August 1999:

"It is true that Dr. Reid was previously a nuclear disarmer, but it is also true that he was one of the first to recognise his mistake, and genuinely campaign for a sensible nuclear deterrent policy.

"As a former professional anti-CND campaigner, I am ready enough to criticise unsuitable Labour appointees, but Dr. Reid does not fall into that category: he would be as good a Defence Secretary as any Labour government could provide."

There is no record of whether Reid was embarrassed by back-slapping from such a quarter but he has developed a skin tough enough to survive in the notoriously

ruthless relationships among the warring comrades of the Scottish Labour Party, where a popular slogan is "a long memory is much better than a good memory". This was the setting for Reid's burning antipathy towards Gordon Brown, dating from the early 1990s when Brown was chairman of Scottish Labour. It is that passion which is likely to drive him to oppose Brown in a leadership contest, winning votes as the "stop Brown" candidate.

Defence

When Labour won the 1997 election Reid's talents (if that is the right word) were recognised in his appointment to a succession of high profile ministerial jobs until, in the reshuffle in May, he was placed as Defence Secretary. It was rumoured that he coveted Jack Straw's job as Foreign Secretary but perhaps his notorious difficulty with the silkily diplomatic touch counted against him; or perhaps Straw sulked and simply refused to go. Another rumour had it that Defence is the job he always prized since it fitted his bellicose personality and anyway, in spite of his much-trumpeted humble origins, he loves taking the salute at military march pasts. A probable reason for his multiplicity of government jobs is that he is what is known as "a safe pair of hands", which is a diplomat's way of saying that he can be relied on unblinkingly to justify - in Parliament, the press, on TV - whatever the Blair government does, no matter how indefensible it is. His voting record is tediously obedient, including on cuts in funding benefits for lone parents and students, on means-tested Incapacity Benefit, on air strikes against Afghanistan and on the war against Iraq. That is how he earned a reputation as "Reid the Rottweiler" and "Teflon John". Attentive fans of Jeremy Paxman will know that the TV interrogator weighed in by describing Reid as Blair's "attack dog", to which Reid responded, as would be expected from one of Her Majesty's Secretaries of State, Privy Counsellor and trusted lieutenant of the Prime Minister, by calling Paxman "a West London wanker".

Reid has consistently shown a readiness to reshape what he still, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, calls his principles in order to solidify his standing in the Labour Party. Of course he may change; there have been countless examples of leaders who have won power on one set of promises and have then outraged their supporters by performing a dramatic u-turn. We know that with Reid anything is possible; there are practically no bounds to what he will say or do, within the confines of support for the capitalist system and its government. Without that ability he would not survive in the hurly-burly of politics. Anyone looking for a promising outsider for the Labour leadership race could do worse than lay a shrewd bet on the Rottweiler - soon, while the odds on him are so attractive. ■

IVAN

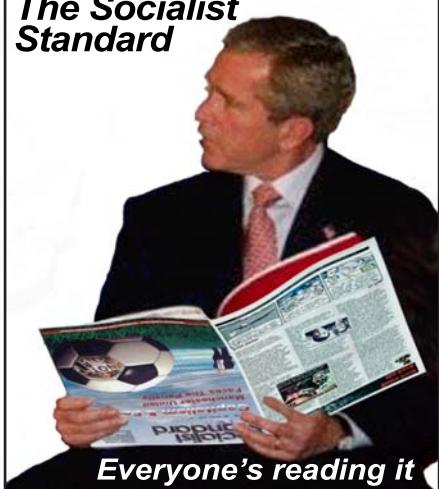
Voice from the Back



GROWING OLD DISGRACEFULLY

A feature often commented upon by historians, is that before private property societies existed the elderly of a kin, clan or tribal group were treated with great respect. Their knowledge of the terrain, animals and availability of food was invaluable to their society. How different today in modern capitalism. "The government is abandoning hundreds of thousands of elderly people to a care system that steals their dignity, denies them meaningful choice and risks endangering their health, according to a hard-hitting report out tomorrow. The report - by the country's leading independent healthcare thinktank, the King's Fund - concludes that funding and organisational problems are putting old people at a disadvantage compared with other recipients of care. It also says that untrained, unqualified and overstretched staff are putting them at risk." The *Observer* (26 June) Let's face it inside capitalism old-age sucks. Although all those social workers forced to make these decisions will themselves be old one day.

The Socialist Standard



Everyone's reading it

MORAL CONSIDERATIONS

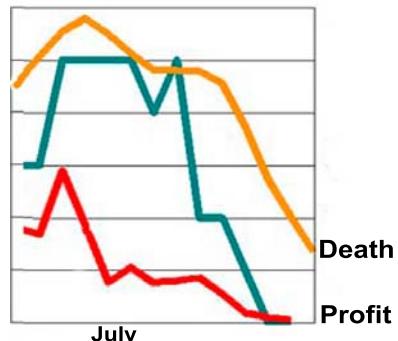
The growing practice of scientific journals to copyright and restrict access to scientific data without cash subscriptions has led Robert Smith, a former editor of the British Medical Journal, to raise a moral dilemma. "Making money out of restricting access to (medical) research is immoral." The *Times* (2 July) In fact Mr Smith you are terribly wrong, inside capitalism it is not only moral but good business practice. Only inside a socialist society will we have unrestricted access to knowledge for every human being on earth. People dying because medical personnel couldn't access the latest scientific knowledge would be unthinkable inside a socialist society. It is quite moral today.

THE GRAPES OF WRATH

In any sane society an abundant harvest from the vineyards would be the cause of celebration and no doubt a little celebratory tipple. But we don't live in a sane society, we live in capitalism where the whole purpose of production is to make a profit not satisfy a social need. "It may seem heinous to any enthusiastic bordeaux drinker, but the EU has pledged £100m under the common agricultural policy to turn 670m bottles of French and Spanish wine into industrial alcohol to help reduce a surplus caused by competition from the New World." The *Sunday Times* (3 July) Inside a socialist society if we produce too much wine we'll just have to drink it. Terrible prospect, aint it?

AN INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

The callousness of capitalism and the cynicism of the capitalist press could hardly be summed up better than this report about the bomb carnage in London that left over 50 dead and scores wounded. "City Index, the financial



spreadbetting firm, said that more than 8,000 retail investors had dived into the market on Thursday, correctly backing their hunch that share prices would quickly bounce back. Some will find profiting from horror distasteful. But many in the City applaud the resilience of capitalism." The *Sunday Times* (10 July) The editors carried this story under the headline - "Investors made millions amid bombs chaos." Could anything be more disgusting? We are talking about trauma, amputation, disfigurement and death here not an investment opportunity.

DARE TO THINK

"A penniless asylum seeker in London was vilified across two pages of the *Daily Mail* last week. No surprise there, perhaps - except that the villain in question has been dead since 1883. "Marx the Monster" was the Mail's furious reaction to the news that thousands of Radio 4 listeners had chosen Karl Marx as their favourite thinker." The *Observer* (17 July) Many people who read the works of Karl Marx realise that the popular concept that he has anything to do with Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin or Mao is nonsense, in fact that he was opposed to dictatorship and authority all his life. Start reading what Marx actually wrote and accept his challenge to think for yourself and bugger the *Daily Mail*.

Free lunch

by Rigg



ISSN 0037 8259

Produced and published by the Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN